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**Governance for Harmony in
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**Julia Tao, Anthony B.L. Cheung,
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3 Harmony as a guiding principle for governance

Chenyang Li

In this chapter I will present a Confucian account of harmony and explore how Confucian harmony may serve as a guiding principle for governance. I will argue that, in the Confucian view, a practical attitude and a pragmatic approach are indispensable to achieving social harmony, and that social harmony has to be established on the basis of the principle of equity.

The Confucian philosophy of harmony

Harmony (*he* 和) is the most cherished ideal in Chinese culture. Although the idea of harmony predates Confucianism, early Confucian classics appropriated ancient thoughts about harmony and gave it central importance.¹ In the *Analects* (13.23; TTC, 2508), Confucius makes *he* a criterion for the characteristic quality of the morally cultivated person (*junzi* 君子). In addressing *li* 禮 (ritualized propriety), one of the two cornerstone concepts in Confucianism,² his disciple You Ruo 有若 maintains, 'of the functions of *li*, harmonization is the [most] precious (禮之用, 和為貴)' (*Analects*, 1.12; TTC, 2458). Confucians take *li* to be a central element of governance and believe that, through the good use of *li*, good government leads to a harmonious society.³ Other early Confucian philosophers, such as Mencius and Xunzi, also highly value *he* (e.g. *Mencius*, 3B.1; 'Xiushen', *Xunzi* 荀子·修身; TTM, 289–90). The *Yijing* develops the notion of 'grand harmony' (*taihe* 太和), the idea that the world is full of different things, yet these things ultimately harmonize as they go through incessant changes. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 B.C.E.), the influential Han Confucian, declares that 'no virtue is greater than harmony (德莫大于和)' and advocates the philosophy of 'using equilibrium and harmony in regulating society (以中和理天下)' ('Xuntianzhidao', *Chungguo fanlu* 春秋繁露循天之道; TTM, 805). For these philosophers, the ability to harmonize in the world is indeed the most precious.

As far as the need for harmony is concerned, Confucians tend to see more consistency than distinction between the 'private' and the 'public' spheres, between the political and the non-political and between human society and the natural world. When persons and things are engaged in a healthy, stable interplay and each gets its due, this is deemed harmony; the opposite is disharmony. When a plant is harmonized with its surroundings, it thrives; when a person is

harmonized with his or her environment, he or she flourishes. The ideal of personal development is to harmonize not only within one's own person but also with other persons. The ideal of a society is to harmonize not only within the society but also with other societies. The ideal of humanity is to harmonize not only among its members but also with the rest of the cosmos as well. For Confucians, the difference between harmony and disharmony is one between right and wrong, good and bad and success and failure.

The Confucian notion of harmony can be characterized as follows. First, harmony is a metaphysical as well as an ethical notion; it describes both how the world at large operates and how human beings should act. Second, harmony is by its very nature relational. It presupposes the coexistence of multiple and diverse parties. As far as harmony is concerned, these parties are of largely equal significance. Harmony is always contextual; epistemologically, it calls for a holistic approach. A mentality of harmony is a contextual mentality. In other words, persons of harmonious mentality see things, and judge things, in relation and in context, not in isolation or separation. Third, Confucian harmony is by no means 'perfect accord' or 'complete agreement'. In harmony, coexisting parties must be in some way different from one another; while harmony does not preclude sameness (or uniformity, *tong* 同) of all kinds, sameness itself is not harmony. Harmony is different from stagnant concordance in that harmony is sustained by energy generated through the interaction of different elements in creative tension. Fourth, the requirement of harmony places a constraint on each party in interaction and, in the meantime, provides a context for each party to have optimal space to flourish. In the Confucian view, the world is not there just for one item or one kind of thing. It is for the 'myriad things' (*wanwu* 萬物). Nothing in the world can claim absolute superiority to all other things. Parties in a harmonious relationship are both conditions for, and constraints to, one another's growth. A harmonious relationship implies mutual complement and mutual support among the parties (see Cheng 1991: 187). There is mutual benefit, even though harmony cannot be reduced to mutual benefit. All these features of harmony make it central to the system of Confucian philosophy.⁴

This philosophy of harmony has strategic significance. It enables us to take into consideration the whole picture of an issue and to give each party its due. It makes us more willing to engage in negotiation, more willing to compromise and less willing to resort to confrontation and conquest. Therefore, if implemented appropriately, it is more conducive to peaceful solutions to problems in the world. In practice, this Confucian ideal of harmony translates into a kind of practical attitude or mentality. It is this mentality that makes the whole world of difference in social practice, including governance.

A practical attitude and a pragmatic approach to governance

In this section I will argue that the Confucian ideal of harmony can be translated into a kind of pragmatic philosophy in politics and governance, and that it

requires us to accommodate various parties in society and to accept compromises as we move from the actual towards the ideal.

For Confucians, the goal of governance is to establish a harmonious society, one in which people care about and are cared for by one another. In such a caring society, suffering is minimized and people are harmonized. Mencius's political philosophy lays the groundwork for a Confucian harmonious society. For Mencius, a good society requires two elements. Economically, people must be able to prosper through their own labour; politically, society must be governed by moral force (*de zhi* 德治). While the former has to do with economic justice, for which Mencius proposed his system of land distribution called *jing tian zhi* 井田制,⁵ the latter implies political justice. It should not surprise us that Mencius's political philosophy developed more than 2,000 years ago is not adequate as a complete political platform for our twenty-first century.⁶ Obviously, good governance of a society needs more than these two basic requirements. Governance involves politics, and politics requires effective political manoeuvres. However, the practical attitude and pragmatic approach implied in the Confucian philosophy of harmony, as I will show next, remain relevant to politics and governance in contemporary society.

There are two dimensions to the Confucian notion of harmony. On the one hand, harmony is a moral, political and social ideal; it encompasses the highest human ideals of truth, goodness and beauty. On the other hand, harmony has a practical dimension: it calls for realization in society. On the latter, harmony must be understood as a process of realization. The process of realization, as harmonization, is to bridge the gap between where we are now and where we want to be in the future. David Hume famously poses a question about the gap between 'is' and 'ought'. 'Is' refers to fact; it is descriptive. 'Ought' refers to value; it is prescriptive. The inference from 'is' to 'ought' is one from statements about what reality is to statements about what we consider desirable. Hume has been assigned the position that there is an unbridgeable gap between 'is' and 'ought'.⁷ In discussing harmonization, we face a different kind of 'is-ought' question. We can use 'is' in reference to 'where we are' and use 'ought' in reference to 'where we want to be'. While 'where we are' is a fact, 'where we want to be' is a future that needs to be translated into fact. Hume's 'is-ought' question is a theoretical and philosophical one which may not have a definitive answer. Our 'is-ought' question is a practical one which demands an answer. Our question is not only why we want to be 'where we want to be', which has to be addressed under the general guidance of the ideal of harmony, but also how we get to 'where we want to be'.

In order to bridge the gap between 'where we are' and 'where we want to be', we first need to adopt a practical attitude. That is to say, we need to realize that our current situation is not yet ideal, which is the very reason for needing to move forward; the goal we set as 'where we want to be' must be realistic and feasible, even if this means that it is less than perfect. Only in this way can we stand on solid ground as we move ahead. Section 15 of the *Zhongyong* 中庸 states, 'The way of the morally cultivated person (*junzi*) is like this: in order to

reach afar, one must begin with the near; in order to climb high, one must start from the low (君子之道，辟如行遠必自邇，辟如登高必自卑) (TTC, 1627). No matter where one wants to reach, one must start with where one is at the moment.

This realistic attitude however does not debar moral forward looking. There is no doubt that Confucius had a strong sense of moral responsibility. He tirelessly travelled to various states to promote his ideal of harmonious society. In this regard, he was determined and unyielding. The *Analec's* records that a doorman commented that Confucius was trying to accomplish the impossible and called him 'the one who promotes what even he knows is impossible (是知其不可而為之者)' (14.41; TTC, 2513). Indeed, Confucius once lamented that if his ideal did not prevail, he would take a raft to sail on the ocean (道不行，乘桴浮于海, *Analec's*, 5.7; TTC, 2473). This shows that Confucius would not give up on his goals. He was determined in promoting his moral ideals. Moral ideals are principles, and they require persistence and dedication. For Confucius, moral ideals are beyond reality. No matter where we progress, we always have higher ideals to pursue. Therefore, moral ideals are never ending. These goals include a harmonious society, which admits degrees and never reaches the ultimate.

The pursuit of moral ideals did not however prevent Confucius from adopting a practical attitude in practice. In putting moral ideals into practice, Confucius demonstrated a practical attitude in many ways. For example, although he did not reject the worshipping of gods, his focus was unmistakably this-worldly. Confucius did not speak about gods (*Analec's*, 7.21; TTC, 2483). When he was specifically asked about gods, he said, 'we cannot even serve people enough, how can we serve gods?' When he was asked about the afterlife, he said, 'we cannot even know this life enough. How can we know the afterlife? (季路問事鬼神。子曰：'未能事人，焉能事鬼？' 敢問死。曰：'未知生，焉知死？')' (*Analec's*, 11.12; TTC, 2499). Although gods and the afterlife are exalted topics, they are not practical issues for Confucius, and they should not take our focus away from human affairs in this world. Confucius also held a practical and realistic attitude towards human moral achievability. On the Confucian ideal of human achievement, there are the 'sage' (*shengren* 聖人), the 'person of *ren*' (*ren ren* 仁人) and the 'morally cultivated person' (*junzi* 君子). The difference between the sage and the person of *ren* is the ability to practise universal love (*Analec's*, 6.30; TTC, 2479).⁸ On this understanding, sageliness has an extremely high standard. Yao and Shun are usually considered sage-kings by Confucians. But according to Confucius, even they were unable to practise universal love constantly. In comparison, the standard for being a sage is higher than that for being a person of *ren*. In the *Analec's*, Confucius never discusses how to become a sage. Section 9.1 of the *Analec's* states that Confucius rarely even talked about *ren*.⁹ But it is evident that in the *Analec's* Confucius talks a lot more frequently about the ideal of the morally cultivated person. The *junzi* is not as exalted an ideal as the person of *ren* and is even far less of the ideal of sagehood. Confucius says, 'How dare I be compared to the sage and the person of *ren*? (若聖與仁，則吾豈敢?)' (*Analec's*, 7.34; TTC, 2484). He says that 'I do not expect to meet

a sage. I would be satisfied if I could meet a *junzi* (聖人吾不得而見之矣。得見君子者，斯可矣)' (*Analec's*, 7.26; TTC, 2483). The *Analec's* frequently addresses what kind of person a *junzi* is and how to become a *junzi*. This fact shows that Confucius had a practical attitude towards moral ideals as well as towards the moral achievability of his disciples. If not practical, beautiful ideals do not bring about desired outcomes. Confucius set his eyes on the practical side of things.

To be practical is to be concerned with the means and logistics of turning ideas into reality. Without feasible means, ideas remain only ideas. To be practical also implies a willingness and readiness to see the realization of an ideal in stages and to accept gradual progress towards the ultimate goal. Politics is about handling the tension between principle and practicality, between ideals and feasibility. Although ideals are important in political pursuit, without practicality, things cannot be accomplished. In governance, a practical attitude, as found in Confucian philosophy, is indispensable to the promotion of a harmonious society.

In addition to a practical attitude, harmonization calls for pragmatic manoeuvres. The latter is an extension of the former. To be pragmatic means to be more concerned with outcomes than with theories and abstract principles. This pragmatic approach allows compromise. Compromise has often been given a negative reputation, taken as a mere irritating inevitability, merely as a price to pay in order to move forward. To be sure, compromise definitely pays for a larger cause, but it is not merely a price. In the view of the philosophy of harmony, compromise must be given a positive significance and be accorded a legitimate place in politics and governance. Harmony is composite; it is realized in the relationships of various components. For this reason, it is inclusive by its very nature. The composite characteristic of harmony requires it to be able to integrate different elements. This integration process consists of two aspects. The first is transformation: through transformation, elements antagonistic to harmony become conducive to harmony. For example, in a political process, one party can persuade another party to change positions and join hands with its cause. In doing so, one party transforms another party into a partner in achieving harmony. Transformation under most circumstances should be mutual transformation, that is, as one party attempts to transform another, this party itself must be willing to consider reasons for its own transformation.¹⁰ The second aspect of integration is accommodation: accommodation is necessary in order to achieve harmony. On the one hand, accommodation implies giving a party its due. On the other, through accommodation, elements that are not yet conducive to harmony are stabilized and prevented from becoming antagonistic to harmony before they can be transformed. Accommodation requires compromise.

In a famous speech titled 'Speech on conciliation with the Colonies', on 22 March 1775, the English statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke said:

All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter. We balance

inconveniences; we give and take; we remit some rights that we may enjoy others; and we choose rather to be happy citizens than subtle disputants. As we must give away some natural liberty to enjoy civil advantages, so we must sacrifice some civil liberties for the advantages to be derived from the communion and fellowship of a great empire.

(Burke 1775: 85)

Putting 'a great empire' aside, we want to build a good society in order to live in harmony with our fellow human beings. Such a society is one of communion, religious or civil, and fellowship. We cannot achieve a state of communion and fellowship without effectively dealing with our fellow human beings in social arrangement. When we balance interests and inconveniences, we engage in a 'give-and-take' relationship with other parties in society that also have interests to be fulfilled. In order to work with them and to live with them in peace, we need to compromise with them in some areas so that we can move towards what we cherish most. Liberty is freedom, but freedom is not free; it comes with a price, and without paying the price we have no liberty. Therefore, we need to compromise with others in building a coherent society. Burke of course also cautions us that things bought 'must bear some proportion to the purchase paid' and one should not barter away the immediate jewel of his or her soul (1775: 85). Any practical steps towards long-term goals need to be based on social reality and political feasibility; good compromise must serve one's long-term goal. In Confucian terms, this means that compromise must serve the goal of long-term harmony. Compromise is necessary, because pushing too hard causes things to break down and therefore can be counterproductive. Confucius once cautioned his disciple Zi Xia 子夏 that 'rushing things will not achieve the goal (欲速則不達) (*Analecbs*, 13.17; TTC, 2507). Accommodation must however be applied along with transformation. Accommodation without transformation is surrender. Transformation without accommodation is imposition. Harmonization consists in the utilization of both transformation and accommodation.

This approach integrative of accommodation and transformation embraces a kind of compromise similar to that about which the political philosopher Richard Bellamy has called 'negotiators'. Bellamy distinguishes four kinds of compromisers in a pluralist society with different value orientations. They are traders, trimmers, segregators and negotiators. Traders compromise by exchanging interests for mutual advantages. For them, everything has a price and can be traded with something considered equivalent or more valuable. Trimmers avoid contentious issues by seeking only the broadest common interests. They leave people with value orientations different from their own alone, at the risk of being indifferent to others and of this resulting in a fragmented society. Segregators, on Bellamy's interpretation, set boundaries between interest groups in order to keep peace, risking severe inequalities in the same society. In contrast, Bellamy proposes a strategy of the negotiators, who 'practice reciprocal accommodation as part of a search for conditions of mutual acceptability that reach towards a compromise that constructs a shareable good' (1999: 101).

Bellamy divides political conflicts into three categories. The first is the conflict of interests over limited resources. The second is the ideological conflict involving rival rights claims. The third is the conflict of opposed identities seeking recognition. While the first type of conflict is usually handled by the trader's approach, by splitting the difference and finding middle ground, the last two types of conflict cannot be adequately dealt with this way. Contentions over rights and identities cannot be resolved by splitting the matter in the middle. They are often matters of 'either/or', demanding a 'yes' or 'no' answer; splitting in the middle often makes things worse for everyone involved. Bellamy argues that in matters of these kinds, we should consider compromise by opting for the 'second best' preference. When two parties cannot reach an agreement on getting their respective first preferences, sometimes it is optimal for each party to step back a little and to accept the second best preference. This way, they might come up with a solution that is more coherent for each than embracing a truncated 'first preference'. Furthermore, Bellamy suggests that, when dealing with a single issue and compromise is impossible to come by, we may need to compromise on process rather than outcome. For example, when a small city mayoral election results in a tie between two candidates and a run-off election would be costly in time and money, compromising on a fair process, such as tossing a coin, might be a good option.¹¹ I would like to add that, in politics, when compromise on a single issue becomes impossible, it may be the best option to adopt the trader's strategy and let one party gain in one issue while giving on another issue, provided that such compromise is subject to continuous re-examination and renegotiation. In the process of compromise, involved parties are both accommodated and transformed at the same time.

The Confucian approach as integration of both accommodation and transformation presupposes a pragmatic approach as opposed to pure idealism, and it promotes social harmony through a negotiating mechanism broadly construed. This pragmatic approach is implied in the Chinese notion of *quan* 權. The word *quan* literally means 'weighing instrument' (*cheng* 秤) or the weight used in such an instrument (*cheng tuo* 秤砣); by extension, it also means the act of weighing. The notion of *quan* is important in Confucian philosophy. For example, Mencius said that one should 'quan first, then one knows the light and the heavy'; measuring first, then one knows the long and the short (權; 然後知輕重; 度; 然後知長短) (1A.7; TTC, 2670–1). In Confucian texts, this word has often been used to mean discretion. It implies both taking adequate consideration of social reality when making rules and maintaining a flexible attitude towards existing rules in performing particular actions. In the latter sense, *quan* means situational decision. In making rules for society, *quan* requires that rules be made to work with social reality. For example, the 'Quli 曲禮' chapter of the *Liji* states that 'the poor do not perform the *li* that requires wealth, and the elderly do not perform the *li* that requires physical strength (貧者不以貨財為禮; 老者不以筋力為禮) (TTC, 1241). Some types of *li* require wealth; they do not however apply to the poor who cannot afford them. Some types of *li* require physical strength; they do not however apply to the physically infirm. There are

rules of *li* for the poor and the infirm of course. But, the rules of *li* for the poor do not require wealth and the rules of *li* for the elderly do not require physical strength. Without this kind of consideration, rules become inappropriate and dysfunctional.

The word *quan* is the same word used in the Chinese terms for 'power' (*quanli* 權力) and 'rights' (*quanli* 權利). The terms *quanli* as power and *quanli* as rights sound the same, but the difference is that the former is the *quan* with force whereas the second is one with interest or benefit. One of the earliest uses of *quan* as power can be found in Lu Deming's 陸德明 (ca. 550–630) Commentary on the *Chunqiu zuozhuan*. In the 'Huangong, 15' chapter, Lu explains that 'Tu had been established illegitimately as the king and did not have enough *quan* to stabilize his position (突既篡立, 權不足以自固)' (TTC, 1757). (For the story of Tu, see the following discussion.) The expression *quanli* 權力 appears in early literature, including the *History of the Later Han* (*Hou Hanshu* 後漢書).¹² We may understand the use of *quan* as power this way: from the meaning of the weight in the weighing instrument one can derive the meaning of carrying weight; if someone carries weight, he or she has *quan*, or power. This understanding may also imply that those with power carry responsibility. One of the earliest uses of *quanli* 權利 is found in the *Mozi*, but there *quan* is used as a verb and the term means 'to weigh the benefit', as opposed to *quanhai* 權害, to weigh the harm (Ch. 40; TTM, 256).¹³ In the *Xunzi*, *quanli* 權利 is used as one expression apparently to mean power and benefit (or power-benefit). Xunzi says that the good person 'will not be undermined by power-benefit (權利不能傾也)' (Ch. 1; TTM, 288). The term's use to mean rights is a recent phenomenon. Therefore, etymologically, the Chinese term for rights means the power (or force) which carries benefit. If this interpretation of these Chinese notions is correct, both *quanli* as power and *quanli* as rights are rooted in the notion of weighing or discretion. Both power and rights, as rules, are contextually determined and can only be exercised legitimately within the society of a harmonious whole.¹⁴

While *quan* can be employed in making rules, it is mostly used in performing particular actions. The 'Huangong, 11' chapter of the Confucian classic *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan* 春秋公羊傳桓公十一年 defines *quan* this way: '*quan* means going contrary to the *jing* in order to achieve goodness (權者, 反於經, 然後有善者也)' (TTC, 2220). *Jing* 經 refers to standard practice established through ancient precedents, or simply the norm. It can be understood as ways or rules to do things within the tradition. *Quan* is deviation from *jing*. Huangong, 11' records a story about Ji Zhong 祭仲, a powerful prime minister of the state of Zheng 鄭 during the Spring and Autumn period. In 701 B.C.E., only two months after the death of King Zhuang of Zheng 鄭莊公, Ji Zhong on his way to inspect a remote district of Zheng was taken hostage in the state of Song. Song insisted that he dispel the new king Hu 忽 and replace Hu with Tu 突, who was the nephew of Song's king, or Song would invade Zheng and kill Hu. Facing the dilemma caused by the powerful Song, Ji Zhong decided to go along with Song while making plans for the eventual return of Hu. By exercising *quan*, Ji Zhong

was able to preserve his state of Zheng and save Hu's life. The *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan* praises Ji Zhong as being good and able because he knew how to exercise discretion (何賢乎祭仲? 以爲知權也; TTC, 2219–20).

We can of course always dispute whether Ji Zhong acted appropriately. But, it is hard to deny that *quan* is needed in real life and particularly in governance. The issue is rather how to exercise it. Furthermore, the Confucian *quan* performed in particular actions is not just any departure from the rules. It is instead a situational application of rules in order to achieve greater harmony. Confucians stress that *quan* is not caprice or completely without boundaries. According to the *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan*, 'there are boundaries in exercising *quan*: it is all right to suffer a personal loss, but not all right to harm others. The morally cultivated person will not kill others so he can live, nor will he dispel others in order to preserve his own post (行權有道, 自貶損以行權, 不害人以行權, 殺人以自生, 亡人以自存, 君子不爲也)' (TTC, 2220). Ji Zhong exercised discretion wisely even though he made concessions; he did not use it to harm others in order to benefit himself. Today, we can explore boundaries for the exercise of *quan* even further. Given that harmony is the ultimate goal of Confucian philosophy, we can make the case that whether the exercise of *quan* is appropriate or not depends ultimately on whether it is conducive to long-term harmony in the world.

Confucius himself may be seen as one who exercised *quan* even though he had to pay a personal price for it. The *Analekts* records that Confucius went to visit Nan Zi 南子, the queen of the Wei state, presumably in order to promote his political agenda. Nan Zi, a woman of notorious reputation, had considerable political clout in the state. According to book 47 of the *Historical Records* (*Shiji* 史記), she sent a message to Confucius saying that if he wanted to work with the king, Confucius had to see her first. Confucius's visit with Nan Zi made his disciple Zi Lu 子路 quite unhappy, and Confucius had to swear to Zi Lu that he had only good intentions (*Analekts*, 6.28; TTC, 2479). For the sake of his own reputation, Confucius would have been better off not to visit Nan Zi. But in order to promote his political agenda for a harmonious society, he had to see her even though it would tarnish his name. Confucius however would oppose the use of *quan* for personal gains.

In the *Mencius*, *quan* is important in moral actions. In a famous passage about rule and discretion, Mencius cites *quan* as the justification for flexibility in moral actions (4A.24; TTC, 2722). For Mencius, *quan* is a necessary element of moral action. He criticizes both the egoistic philosophy of Yang Zhu 楊朱, who is said to have refused to give away a single hair even if it would benefit the entire world, and the passionate philosophy of Mozi 墨子, who advocated universal, indiscriminate love. Mencius said: 'Zi Mo held to centrality (*zhong*). Holding to centrality is close to being right. Only holding to centrality without *quan* however is still like merely holding to one side (子莫執中, 執中爲近之, 執中無權, 猶執一也.)' (*Mencius*, 7A.43; TTC, 2768).

Zi Mo was able to achieve equilibrium between the extremes of Yang Zhu and Mozi.¹⁵ Here, Mencius makes a link between *quan* and *zhong*. *Zhong*

(centrality) is crucial to Confucian harmony.¹⁶ However, in achieving harmony in accordance with *zhong*, Confucians emphasize the use of *guan*. Without *guan*, *zhong* becomes mere rigidity.

Because *guan* requires not only making rules to work with actual circumstances but also sometimes bending rules, its risk is obvious; it can be easily abused or misused. Indeed, it can be argued that, in Chinese society, the problem with *guan* is not its lack but its abuse. This fact should not however preclude us from understanding the implication of *guan* in Confucianism, just as the overuse and abuse of attorneys in the United States today does not mean that legal assistance and representation itself is unnecessary or a bad thing. Because *guan* comes with risk, it is a skill that is difficult to acquire. The *Analects* records Confucius as saying:

Those who can learn together may not be able to pursue the way together. Those who can pursue the way together may not be able to establish themselves. Those who can establish themselves together may not be able to exercise *guan* together. (可與共學，未可與適道；可與適道，未可與立；可與立，未可與權)

(*Analects*, 9.29; TTC, 2491)

Accordingly, among these four things that are important to accomplish, namely, learning, pursuing the way, establishing oneself and exercising *guan*, exercising *guan* is the most difficult. For Confucius, being able to exercise *guan* well is a high achievement which has to be acquired after one is able to learn, to follow the way and to establish oneself. 'Establish', or *li* 立, here should be understood in reference to the expression in 8.8 of the *Analects* of *li yu li* 立於禮, that is, becoming established on rules of propriety. Confucius declared himself to be 'established' when he was 30 years old (*Analects*, 2.4; TTC, 2461). According to the previous passage, being able to exercise *guan* well is more difficult than becoming established on *li*. This suggests that *guan* is an ability of higher refinement than *li*.¹⁷

The Confucian notion of governing the state with *li* and deference (*li tang* 禮讓) implies that society should operate in accordance with known rules as well as propriety (*Analects*, 4.13; TTC, 2471). In the Confucian view, a morally as well as politically mature person is able not only to act by *li* but also to perform *guan*. Indeed, he or she is able to perform *guan* with *li*. The 'Sangfu 喪服' chapter of the *Liji* says:

The great embodiment of *li* lies in its manifestation of Heaven and Earth, its being based on the four seasons, its following of the yin and the yang and its moving along with human actualities. This is why it is called *li*. (凡禮之大體，體天地，法四時，則陰陽，順人情，故謂之禮。)

(TTC, 1694)

Further:

As to *li*, the auspicious and the ominous are on different paths and must not interfere with each other. This is in accordance with the principle of the yin and the yang. [For example], the *li* of the funeral has four guidelines. We should adopt them appropriately in accordance with the four seasons. [In *li*, there is beneficence (*en*), there is reasonableness (*li* 理), there is moderation (*jie*) and there is discretion (*guan*). These are taken from the actualities in human life. Those who are beneficial are benevolent; those who act reasonably are morally appropriate; those who act with moderation have civility; those who exercise discretion are wise. Benevolence, moral appropriateness, rules of civility and wisdom constitute the complete human way. (夫禮，吉凶異道，不得相干，取之陰陽也。喪有四制，變而從宜，取之四時也。有恩，有理，有節，有權，取之人情也。恩者仁也；理者義也；節者禮也；權者知也。仁義禮知，人道具矣。)

(TTC, 1694)

Here, the use of *en* 恩, which can also be translated as 'favour', carries a strong imprint of its age, because in Mencius's time the state was regarded as owned by the king and any state benefit to the people was considered a favour from the king. Today, we should understand this notion broadly to include governmental policies beneficial to the people. Mencius's economic principle of 'enriching the people' (*fu min* 富民) can be seen as a specific requirement of beneficence, or *en*. His principle of using moral force can be seen as the requirement of reasonableness (*li* 理) and moral appropriateness. The third requirement, moderation, is a translation of *jie* 節. *Jie* literally means 'bamboo joints'; in music, it means 'rhythm'. Used in describing actions, it refers to acting with restraint. The expression of having *jie* 有節 in action means acting from stage to stage gradually according to a plan: well-phased action. It suggests that one should consider specific circumstances in staging actions. Having *jie* is therefore contrary to acting recklessly regardless of the actual need, and it requires us to move one stage at a time. This resonates with the Confucian value of 'timing' (*shi* 時). Good action cannot be performed without good timing. *Jie* also implies being regulated. *Li* has the function of regulating our behaviour in practicing *ren* as stated in *Mencius*, 4A.27.¹⁸ The last of these four requirements is *guan*. While good timing and well-phased action are mainly temporal or sequential, *guan* bears on both sequential and simultaneous considerations. It has to do with decisions as to both how fast and in which way to move forward. *Guan* calls for practical wisdom. Practical wisdom comes only from experience, and this is why *guan* does not have a standard formula. Only people with practical wisdom can exercise *guan* well.

These four requirements should be understood as mutually constraining and mutually promoting. For example, the use of *guan* should be reasonable (*li*), moderate (*jie*) and beneficial (*en*) to society. Only when exercised with the other three can *guan* be conducive to long-term harmony in society. The passage summarizes by saying that beneficence, moral appropriateness, rules of civility and wisdom make up the complete human way. Although the previous passage uses

the performance of funerals as an example, its teaching about *li* has broader implications.¹⁹ In ancient times, *li* was a broad concept, including not only rituals of daily behaviour but also legal code, that is, rules of law. Because in Confucianism *li* is both the foundation and the mechanism for governance, these four requirements apply to governance as well as to human behaviour in other dimensions of social life.

From the discussion of the Confucian notion of *quan* we can see that *quan* is an important element of the Confucian philosophy of governance. *Quan* requires pragmatic manoeuvres in politics and governance. Without it, society cannot operate smoothly and progressively. In order to achieve and maintain social harmony, we need to keep in mind the feasibility and viability of our actions towards our goals. Too much demand from abstract principles or pushing too hard directly towards long-term goals without giving adequate consideration to feasibility at the present stage may cause ruptures in society and may jeopardize harmony both for now and for the future. In governance, *quan* is not only needed as particular actions, but more importantly in making policies and, in today's society, in legislation. In order to achieve harmony in society, social policies and laws must be made appropriately to reflect the complex needs and new circumstances in society. Confucians hold that rules of *li* must be suitable to specific circumstances of the society. In an age of 'rule of law', this Confucian notion is of particular significance to the achievement of social harmony.

This practical attitude and pragmatic approach, deeply rooted in Confucianism, enable it to deal with many contemporary challenges. As human society evolves and new social realities merge, there are new issues in society to be addressed. For example, in ancient agricultural societies, life was far more predictable than it is in modern times, and people were married at very young ages. Obviously, parents were more experienced and more knowledgeable than their young children on what conditions would be necessary for having a stable and healthy family. Under these circumstances, it was justifiable for parents to play a major role in decisions regarding their children's marriage. This is obviously no longer the case in modern times. Now, people get married at rather late ages and at a time when they are mature enough to understand their lives to a considerable degree. Life in modern times is much less predictable than in the old days in part because of greater social mobility; even experienced parents do not necessarily understand life better than their children. In these circumstances, it is reasonable for parents to be less involved in decisions regarding children's marriage. Even though Confucians would strongly promote the value of the family in individuals' lives, including decisions on marriage, Confucians can accept a mere consulting role regarding their children's marriage. This holds true on other issues as well. In ancient agricultural societies, members of a community were closely knitted into a social web, and it was important for everyone to maintain his or her role in order to strengthen and preserve the social fabric, which was essential for a healthy society. This situation has changed tremendously; the contemporary time and society have turned more dynamic and diverse, in part because the means of production has changed (industrialization,

the information age). The new era requires society to leave more space for individuals.

This change raises serious issues with Confucianism because it traditionally has tended towards promoting the cohesiveness of society. The practical attitude inherent in Confucianism should enable it to find ways to accommodate the needs in contemporary society without losing too much of its traditional base. It can be argued that, today, leaving adequate space for individuals is necessary for creating and maintaining a cohesive, healthy and harmonious society. Of course, this does not mean that Confucians should simply adopt liberals' agenda and abandon Confucianism's core values in the family and social solidarity. In dealing with contemporary challenges, Confucians need to resist two tendencies. The first is to be stuck with Confucianism's traditional way of thinking that is suitable only for an ancient agricultural society and cannot be adapted to a changing world. This kind of obstinacy goes to the contrary of the Confucian practical attitude and is not conducive to the future development of Confucianism. The second tendency is to have a wholesale acceptance of liberal values and to be unmindful of the characteristic values of Confucianism; in doing so, Confucianism is turned into a Chinese liberalism. I believe that both tendencies must be resisted. On the one hand, Confucianism needs to be amendable and practical in order to keep up with society. On the other, it should not leap ahead of itself and lose its ultimate goal of harmonizing the world, which cannot be achieved without a holistic approach to world issues.²⁰

The principle of equity

So far, I have argued that governance for harmony requires a practical attitude and pragmatic manoeuvres and that this requirement can be justified on the grounds of feasibility and viability of the aim towards social harmony. Without a practical attitude and pragmatic manoeuvres, the ideal of social harmony cannot be achieved. In this section I will argue that a pragmatic manoeuvre, which requires compromise and accommodation, is justified and should be guided by the principle of equity. The Confucian ideal of harmony promotes the principle of equity in social policy.

Equity is commonly understood as justice according to fairness. In the West, equity (*epiikeia*) was used from early on by the ancient Greeks to mean right, proper and appropriate in the general sense (Hamburger 1971: 90). Aristotle was among the earliest philosophers to address the issue of equity. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses the issue of equity in the context of law and justice. There, equity or the equitable is understood as a kind of flexibility or amenability in applying the law in a particular situation. Aristotle writes, 'There are some things about which it is impossible to enact a law, so that a special decree is required' (1962: 142, line 1137b). Equity is used for that special decree and makes it possible for the law to be enacted appropriately. But if the law is already just, why do we need equity as a special decree? Aristotle explains that this is so because

where a thing is indefinite, the rule by which it is measured is also indefinite, as is, for example, the leaden rule used in Lesbian construction work.²¹ Just as this rule is not rigid but shifts with the contour of the stone, so a decree is adapted to a given situation.

(Aristotle 1962: 142, line 1137b)

According to Aristotle, the equitable is a corrective of what is legally just. It is in one sense better than justice because the equitable rectifies the law where law becomes inadequate by reason of its universality and generality. Aristotle maintains that the equitable person is no stickler for justice in the bad sense but is satisfied with less than his own share even though he has the law on his side. A law is a rule intended to be applicable generally and universally. Reality however is not uniform, and it defies universality and generality. Equity bridges the gap between generality and particularity. To be equitable requires us to give each particular situation its due. Therefore, the equitable is superior to the just (the law). Aristotle, in his deliberation on equity, raises an interesting and important question. He says, 'it appears odd that the equitable should be distinct from the just and yet deserve praise. If the two terms are different, then either the just is not of great moral value, or the equitable is not just' (Aristotle 1962: 141, line 1137b). His answer is that equity in some important sense is not different from justice. Aristotle explains:

The equitable is just despite the fact that it is better than the just in one sense.

But it is not better than the just in the sense of being generically different from it. This means that just and equitable are in fact identical [in genus], and, although both are morally good, the equitable is the better of the two.

(Aristotle 1962: 141, line 1137b)

Justice, in the narrow sense here, refers to the law. The law is just because it aims towards justice and functions to maintain justice in society. But, equity is superior because it reaches justice where the law falls short. The just society cannot be just without the law, and it cannot be just if it solely depends on the law. Real justice can be achieved only by the law with equity as its corrective.

Aristotle, unlike his predecessors on the issue of equity, discusses equity solely in the context of law and makes it a correlate concept to the law. His discussion however catches the spirit of the concept. In parallel with Aristotle, we can take equity as a general concept of social philosophy and contrast it with any other general principle of social philosophy which works best with an accompanying corrective. For example, we can say the same thing about equity and equality. Equality is a necessary component of justice. A society without equality cannot be a just one. Equality alone however does not bring justice in society. Equity is needed as a corrective of the principle of equality as it is with the law in Aristotle. Equality is without doubt a component of justice. It does not however exhaust the whole notion of justice. Where the concept of equality falls short in achieving the just society, we need equity. Following Aristotle and using

the language of harmony, we may say that, while equality is just and good, it is not perfect and it needs other elements to generate a harmonious society; equity is one such element.

For Confucians, equity is a philosophical principle, extending far beyond the legal domain. In the Confucian context, equity can be understood as an integration of equality at one level and special consideration at another level. Equality means treating everyone the same way and the same rule applying to everyone indiscriminately. At the highest or most abstract level, the principle of equity requires us to give each the same consideration. In some sense, we can say this implies treating everyone with equality. At another, more specific level, the principle of equity requires us to treat each according to his or her specific circumstances and therefore to give these circumstances due consideration. With these two levels of consideration combined, we can say that equity implies treating everyone with the same kind of fairness in accordance with individual circumstances. Needless to say, this principle goes against the principle of equality in the abstract sense, under which accommodations for particular circumstances may not be justified. Under the principle of equity, accommodations for particular circumstances are not only justifiable but also required.

This idea of equity in harmonizing society can be traced to Confucius himself. Confucius said:

I have heard that, for those heading a state or an enfeoffed estate, the real trouble is not to have a small population but not to give each one's due;²² it is not to have poor land but to be unpeaceful. When people get their due, there is no poor land. When there is harmony, there is no smallness. When there is peace, there is no threat to the state. (丘也聞有國有家者，不患寡而患不均，不患貧而患不安。蓋均無貧，和無寡，安無傾)

(*Analec*s, 16.1; TTC, 2520)

Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), in his classic commentary on the *Analec*s, elaborated on this passage as follows:

[W]hen people get their due, you do not need to be afraid of having poor land and you can achieve harmony. When there is harmony, you do not need to be afraid of having a small population and you can maintain peace. (均則不患於貧而和，和則不患於寡而安)

(Zhu 1985: 70)

Here, Confucius is not saying that having a small population or having poor land is good or preferable. He is saying that when people get their due, they will enrich the land,²³ and when a society is harmonious, people will come from afar to join it. Confucius's philosophy is that, when there is equity in governmental policies, it brings about social harmony; when there is social harmony, there is peace within and between states. The key to social harmony and world peace therefore is equity among the people.

One of the earliest Confucian texts to advocate this principle of equity is the 'Xi Ci Commentary B' (系辭下傳) of the *Yijing*. The text proposes the ideal of *ge de qi suo* '各得其所, or 'each gets its due' (TTC, 86). According to this ideal, if various components in the world are to contribute to the grand harmony, each should get its due in accordance with its own nature. This is also called *ge zheng xing ming* 各正性命, or 'each gets vindicated on its own path of life' ('Tuan, Xiang commentary', *Yijing* 易經象傳乾, TTC, 14). The Song Neo-Confucian scholar Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) explains, in his *Yichuan Yizhuan* 伊川易傳:

Everything in the world has its due. If it gets its due, it is in peace. If it loses its due, it causes trouble. The sages were able to make the world smooth and peaceful not because they made rules for everything, but because they succeeded in letting everything get its due. (萬物庶事莫不各有其所, 得其所則安, 失其所則悖. 聖人所以能使天下順治, 非能為物作則也, 惟止之各於其所而已.)²⁴

If we see the entire world as a grand harmony, things in it are components of this harmony, each contributing to the grand whole. On such an understanding, everything has a unique role to play in this great whole. When each component gets to function in its proper role, and thus gets its due, the world is harmonized. For this reason, Zhu Xi claims that 'when each of the myriad things gets its due, it is harmony (萬物各得其所, 便是和)'.²⁵

This relation between equity and harmony can be understood from the perspective of evolution. Through the evolutionary process, everything in the world evolves along with other things and in connection with other things. This connection in evolution can be seen as a kind of collaboration and negotiation in that each thing has its own place in the overall system of existence. If we believe that the natural evolutionary process is a balanced one, then we can say that the components in it all have their roles to play in contributing to the overall harmony of the world. Consequently, their places in the world are justified in the world. Human society is a special segment of the natural world. Even though human society has its own characteristics, the formation and re-formation of human society have their own processes of evolution. Analogously, in human society each person has his or her own place in the social system. In a fair society, each person gets what he or she deserves and gets recognized accordingly. Good governance aims at letting people play their own roles in a mutually and collectively beneficial way.

The Confucian classic the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學) begins by stating three great aims. The first is to manifest the enlightening virtues; the second is to love people; the third is to achieve the highest good. The first task translates into continuous progress from cultivating oneself to managing the family, to governing the state and further to harmonizing the world. These three aims are not separate goals. In achieving the first, one also practises loving people and moves towards the highest good. In the *Zhuzi yulei*, chapter 14, Zhu Xi interprets the Cheng Brothers' statement about 'giving everything its due' to mean the same as

'achieving the highest good (上於至善)' in the *Great Learning*. He cites Cheng Yi's saying that everything in the world has its due and then concludes that 'the so-called "ending with what it is due" is just achieving the highest good (所謂 "止其所" 者, 即止於至善之地也)'.²⁶ Thus, according to Zhu Xi, the highest good is achieving the state where everything gets its due. If everything gets its due, the entire world harmonizes. This is the highest good in Confucianism. If the highest good requires us to give each his or her due and to let each thrive in his or her own way, this is also the highest goal of the Confucian social and political programme. On such an understanding, we can say that the Confucian ideal of good governance includes the principle of 'giving each its due', namely, the principle of equity.

In giving each its due in the world, we will inevitably encounter the question of competition among various components of the world. There can be competition between people, between groups of people and between people and the natural world. How can we determine what is the due of each? When there is competition and giving one's 'due' may interfere with giving the 'due' of another, how can we determine the appropriate solution? From the Confucian point of view, the question of due cannot be addressed adequately from mere abstract principles, because principles themselves are produced in a social context; what is one's due is always a contextual matter and is determined within the harmonizing process of the world. Therefore, we have to consider these questions in the large context of harmony, either the harmony between persons, or between social groups or between humans and the natural world. We can understand this relation between what is due to each in the world and the overall harmony of the world as one in a hermeneutical circle. With the hermeneutical circle in interpreting a text, the meaning of a word or phrase has to be determined in the context of the whole text on the one hand, and the meaning of the whole text needs to be understood through understanding its component words and sentences on the other. We may have to move back and forth in the process of interpretation, but that is the only process in which meanings are determined. This is so because the meaning of a word is contextually determined; as Quinean holism suggests, if we were to change the meaning of the rest of the language system far enough, the word's meaning would change as well. Analogously, in determining one's due within the context of social harmony, such a hermeneutical circle takes place not only epistemologically but also ontologically. That is to say, it is not only a matter of how we recognize the due to each but also a matter of how each person's due is established in the world in the first place. We cannot determine what the due of each is without making reference to the context of the harmonious world; we cannot achieve overall harmony in the world without giving consideration to the due of each. The two mutually interpret each other and constitute each other. There should be equilibrium between the two poles. In some sense, the evolution of human society demonstrates a never-ending process of this equilibrium.

Accordingly, what is considered a right is always a contextual matter and it needs to be balanced with other rights. Imagine that people on a remote, small

island each own a freshwater well in their backyards as their only source of fresh water. We can readily say that they all have a strong right to their own wells. Then, imagine that all wells have dried up with the exception of one. Does the owner of this last well still have the same right to her well? I think not, because the context has changed. We usually consider the reproduction right an absolute one; a person has the right to decide how many children he or she can have. But if the human population exceeds the carrying capacity of the earth, do we still have such a right? I think not. However, after a right is established in a society, it retains relative stability and should not be dismissed arbitrarily as long as the large context does not go through significant changes. In society, what is due to a person is also a contextual matter. For example, the husband and the wife are two persons in a relationship. One person's due is not independent of the other's. In determining the husband's due, we need to consider the wife's due as well, and vice versa. If the husband treats the wife as a slave and does not give the wife her due, she can no longer contribute to the harmony of the family. We can say the same about people in the work place. Co-workers are a team; the team thrives when team members cooperate harmoniously. If some team members get considerably more than their dues and others get considerably less, the team cannot function harmoniously.

This also holds true to relationships between social groups. In so far as social groups are all components in the large context of social harmony, each group should get its due. For example, in the recent movement in promoting social harmony in China, one major issue is how to overcome increased gaps in economic development between eastern and southern regions on the one hand and north-western regions on the other, and between the wealthy and the poor everywhere. In order to achieve the desired harmony in society, the government reportedly has adopted policies more favourable to the disadvantaged. In reality, this means that wealthy regions and groups will have to bear more economic burdens in assisting the poor. In order to give the poor their due, such policies can be justified because they contribute to the overall harmony of the society.²⁷

We must fully understand the implications of the principle of equity. At some point, giving each its due according to the principle of equity may contradict the principle of equality. Taken abstractly without adequate consideration to equity, the principle of equality may result in extreme inequality. For example, if medical care becomes expensive and can only be purchased with large sums of money, then the poor will not be able to afford medical care, as has been happening in the United States for a long time and in China in recent years. Abstractly speaking, one can argue that everyone is equal as long as one has adequate money to pay for medical care. But in reality, this kind of equal treatment results in deplorable inequality, which in turn leads to social disharmony. Therefore, it has to be remedied by equity. In the process of harmonization, there is a creative tension between pragmatic manoeuvres of accommodation on the one hand and the principle of equality on the other. Let us take the example of minority group rights in modern society. Critics of minority group rights often criticize such 'rights' as violations of the principle of equality. Proponents,

including liberals such as Will Kymlicka, have however attempted to defend such 'rights'. On the harmony model, such 'rights' or privileges can be justified on the ground of equity. Take the example of the 'one-child policy' in China.²⁸ Under this policy, ethnic minorities are not subject to the same restrictions as people of the Han majority. This can be justified on the ground that ethnic minorities make up a relatively small portion of China's population. If China is to become a harmony of different ethnicities as it purports to already be, special privileges given to minorities are conducive to such a goal. Although under the principle of equality, each individual in China should have the same rights, under the principle of equity, there is no problem in justifying this preferential policy. Such a preferential policy may be seen as a means of accommodation in order to achieve ethnic harmony. To be sure, this kind of practice can be seen as a violation of equality. In the Confucian view, such violations of equality in the name of compromise can be accepted and accommodated, because they contribute to the realization of harmony on large scales and in the long run.

Conclusion

In summary of the previous discussion, we can say the following: The Confucian philosophy of harmony provides us with a holistic understanding of the nature of human society; its philosophy of governance aims at building a harmonious and prosperous society. Such a society is governed in accordance with a code of ritualized propriety, i.e. *li*. *Li* requires the government to operate with four guidelines, namely, beneficence (*en*), reasonableness (*li*), moderation (*yi*) and discretion (*quan*). These guidelines imply a practical attitude and pragmatic handling in governance. In such a harmonious society, the benchmark for government policy is equity rather equality. In a Confucian view, a practical attitude, pragmatic manoeuvres and consideration of equity are necessary elements in governance for a harmonious society.²⁹

Notes

- 1 Notably, the *Zuo*zhuan and the *Guoyu*.
- 2 The other concept is *ren* 仁 (human excellence).
- 3 For instance, the *Zhouli*, 'Tianguan' 周禮·天官 promotes the use of *li* in order to 'harmonize the country (以和邦國)' (TTC, 645).
- 4 For a fuller discussion of Confucian harmony, see Li 2006.
- 5 This is the system in which each family is assigned a private parcel of land of equal size, while eight families are jointly responsible for one central, public piece of land equal in size to one of the private pieces.
- 6 Elsewhere I have discussed such issues as Confucian political philosophy and democracy (see Li 1999).
- 7 Hume may or may not have held such a position, even though his remark seems to discourage such a move. See his thoughts on this in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, book 3, section 1 (see www.class.uhd.edu/mickelsen/texts/Hume%20Treatise/hume%20treatise3.htm).
- 8 For the difference between the Confucians and the Mohists on universal love, see Li 1999: 106.

- 9 Students of Confucius have long been perplexed by this statement, because *ren* is a rather frequent topic in the *Analecs*. Section 9.1 may or may not be accurate. Some authors have attempted to read away this puzzling statement by changing its punctuation. I think there is another possible explanation: specifically, Confucius may indeed have rarely talked about *ren*, but his disciples may have gathered in the *Analecs* his discussions of *ren* disproportionately more than other topics.
- 10 This is similar to the relation between persuading others and being persuaded, which I discussed in Li 2003.
- 11 This actually happened in 2003 in Stanley, Idaho, USA. See 'The toss of a coin decides mayoral race in Stanley', *Idaho Mountain Express*, 12–18 November 2003.
- 12 The 'Biography of Liu Yi 劉翽傳' section records that someone 'relied on Officer Cheng's power to seize hills and creeks for his own plantation (特程夫人權力求占山澤以自營植)'. The *History of the Later Han* was authored by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445).
- 13 Such uses of the term can also be found in Yanzi *Chunqiu* (晏子春秋), Ch. 3, and *Historical Records* (*Shiji* 史記), Ch. 112.
- 14 I would like to thank Professor Anthony Cheung for his suggestion to look into this connection between *guan* on the one hand and both *guanli* 權力 as power and *quanli* 權利 as rights on the other.
- 15 Zi Mo is not to be confused with Mozi. Zhao Qi 趙岐 (103?–201), in his classic *Commentary on the Mencius*, says that 'Zi Mo was a good and able person in the state of Lu (子莫, 魯之賢人也)'. There is no other record of such a person.
- 16 *Zhong* can also be translated as 'equilibrium'. Here Mencius uses *zhong* in a narrow sense because, broadly construed, *zhong* should imply *guan*. For the connection between *zhong* and harmony in Confucianism, see Li 2004.
- 17 For more discussion of Confucian flexibility with rules, see Li 1999: Ch. 4.
- 18 I thank P. J. Ivanhoe for bringing this passage in the *Mencius* to my attention.
- 19 As well said by the authors of the *Comprehensive Commentary on the Liji* (禮記大全), Hu Guang 胡廣 *et al.*, this passage 'is not just about the *li* of funerals (不獨喪禮為然也)' (Siku Quanshu Online, version 3.0).
- 20 For more discussion of related issues, see Li 1999.
- 21 Martin Oswald writes:
- The reference is to the Lesbian molding which had an undulating curve. The leaden rule, as explained by Steward in *Notes on the Nicomachean Ethics* (Vol. I, p. 531), was 'a flexible piece of lead which was first accommodated to the irregular surface of a stone already laid in position, and then applied to other stones with the view of selecting one of them with irregularities which would fit most closely into those of the stone already laid'.
- (Aristotle 1962: 142)
- 22 I follow Zhu Xi's interpretation here. Zhu interprets this sentence as follows: 'Jun means that each gets its due (均謂各得其分)'. See Zhu's *Collected Annotations of the Analects* (Zhu 1985). He Yan 何晏, in his classic commentary, interpreted *bu jun* 不均 as 'handling governmental affairs unfairly (政理之不均平)' (TTC, 2520).
- 23 He Yan remarks in his commentary, 'when people are peaceful, the nation gets rich (民安則國富)' (TTC, 2520).
- 24 The same passage can also be found in *Jinsi lu* (近思錄), Ch. 8 (see www.ncu.edu.tw/~phi/confucian).
- 25 *Zhuizi yulei* 朱子語類, Ch. 96 (see www.sinica.edu.tw/fms-bih/new/fmsw3?rdb=%A4Q9%A4T1%B8&).
- 26 See www.sinica.edu.tw/fms-bih/new/fmsw3?rdb=%A4Q9%A4T1%B8g.
- 27 See the chapter by Kang Ouyang in this volume.
- 28 This policy has been controversial. I will not argue its legitimacy and merit or disadvantages here.

- 29 I would like to thank the audience at the 'Governance for harmony: linking visions' workshop held at the City University of Hong Kong, 8–9 June 2006 and, in particular, P. J. Ivanhoe for comments on previous versions of this paper.

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